

Advocating
Awareness
through the
Collaboration
of
Teachers



Youth Voter Initiative Program
(Teacher's Edition)



Advocacy Alliance Center of Texas

www.aactnow.org



ADVOCACY ALLIANCE CENTER OF TEXAS

MEMORANDUM

TO: AACT Voter Initiative Program Participants

FROM: AACT (Non-Profit, Non-Partisan Organization)

RE: CURRICULUM

We would like to thank you for implementing the AACT Voter Initiative Program. AACT's efforts continue to expand as a result of the hard work and cooperation of our community partners.

The attached curriculum was compiled by the AACT research team to present topics of interest that promotes the importance of voting through education.

Thank you for your support of the AACT Voter Initiative Program. We look forward to increasing voter turnout so that we can secure greater access to funding for education, healthcare, veterans, and infrastructure. By educating, engaging, and empowering the people of South Texas, we can help translate votes into power; power to change job growth, the economy, immigration, and the overall quality of life.

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Outline of the Program Elements

Introduction

This program contains important facts and concepts that can be used to teach voter education. The materials included can provide the students the opportunity to learn about the importance of casting a vote and the impact it can have on their future and future of our communities. In addition to the educational materials, students can have an opportunity to fill out a registration card and become eligible to vote in local, state, and national elections. Students will also be challenged to educate, engage, and empower others to participate in the electoral process.

Materials Provided/Needed

There will be a voter education PowerPoint presentation for the instructor and a class set of registration cards, pledge cards, pens, stickers, handouts, and in some cases other materials provided for by AACT. Resources that can supplement the voting lesson (i.e. a projector, books, etc.) can be provided by the school based upon availability.

Vocabulary

A list of vocabulary words are selected so that the student has a clear understanding of the voter education lesson.

Summary

AACT's voter education initiative program is an effort to increase youth civic education and engagement. This takes time. Consider the lesson(s) in this packet as part of a process that will build an understanding in becoming a responsible citizen.

VOTER REGISTRATION – WHO CAN VOTE?

ESSENTIAL QUESTION

What are my political rights? What is the importance of my political rights such as the right to vote? How do I exercise my rights?

OBJECTIVES

Upon completion students will:

- Have a general understanding about the history of voting
- Be informed on the various qualifications and requirements for voting in Texas
- Develop an understanding and curiosity about the political process
- Realize the importance and impact of a vote
- Be able to register to vote
- Have an opportunity to spread AACT's message to 10 family members or friends

STANDARDS State standards for Civics and Government, PreK-12

ESSENTIAL BACKGROUNDS

Students should be able to evaluate, take, and defend positions on issues involving political rights.

Students should understand that citizens must be aware of their rights and the necessity to exercise them responsibly and fulfill those personal and civic responsibilities necessary in a self-governing, free, and just society.

Students should understand the voting process

History of Voting

The Ancient Greeks were the first ancient people thought to have practiced voting. They would meet daily in their city's Agora to discuss relevant topics of the times. They would take a vote by a show of hands or some type of primitive ballot.

Here in the United States when our forefathers established this country, they saw to it that the Constitution had a provision for allowing citizens the freedom to vote and chose their leaders. The first voters were: men, 21 years or older, citizens of the newly established United States, and of Anglo Saxon decent. Obviously this practice was discriminatory towards women and slaves. It was not until after the Civil War that it changed. President Abraham Lincoln, who was given credit for freeing the slaves, also fought to give them voting rights. The Fifteenth Amendment to the Constitution, ratified on February 3, 1870, gave African Americans the right to vote. It would be almost 50 years later before women, through the progress of the Suffrage Movement, would be granted the right to vote.

After African Americans and women were given the right to vote, there were no changes in the voting laws until 1970 when President Richard M. Nixon was preparing for reelection in the 1972 presidential race. The issues he faced were: the prolonged continuation of the war in Viet Nam, outrageous oil prices and never-ending Civil Rights violations. He felt one way to help his reelection campaign was to lower the voting age to draw votes from the younger generation. Through his efforts, the voting age was lowered from 21 to 18, and he was reelected.

Significant documents that have influenced our right to vote as Americans

- I. History and Background of Voting
 - A. European contributions
 1. Magna Carta
 2. English Bill of Rights
 - B. Early American Voting
 1. Mayflower Compact
 2. Fundaments Orders of Connecticut
 3. United States Constitution
 - a. Amendment 15
 - b. Amendment 19
 - c. Amendment 24
 - d. Amendment 26
 4. Voting Rights Act of 1965 as amended in 1970 and 1975

Disenfranchised Individuals (1792-1920)

Barriers that affected voting rights: language, race, sex, land ownership, and local law.

INDIANS

Although Indians fought with the English against the French and owned land in America, they could not be citizens and could not vote in the United States. An interesting thing to note is that Englishmen who settled in the colonies customarily thought of citizenship as a birthright to anyone born in a country and thought of property ownership as a requirement for right to vote. Indians were granted voting rights in 1870 (15th Amendment).

SLAVES

Slaves were not allowed to vote.

FREE BLACKS

Free blacks owned property and fought in the Revolutionary and 1812 wars with white colonists, however they were not allowed to vote because they were black. African Americans were granted voting rights in 1870 (15th Amendment).

AFRICAN AMERICANS

There was a literacy requirement to vote in many states, and there were poll taxes in the other states. In many cases, these barriers prohibited African Americans from voting even after the Fifteenth Amendment was passed.

SMALL FARMERS IN NORTH CAROLINA

Farmers who had 50 acres or more could vote in elections for both the lower and upper house of the state legislature. Farmers with fewer than 50 acres could vote in elections for the lower house.

WHITE MALES IN VERMONT

When Vermont became a state in 1792, all white males continued to share the privilege to vote—as they had when Vermont separated from New Hampshire and New York.

WOMEN

Most local laws did not allow women the right to vote. Women were granted voting rights in 1920 (19th Amendment).

LANDOWNERS IN MASSACHUSETTS

In order to vote in Massachusetts, a man needed to own at least 50 acres of land. If a man owned less than 50 acres, he was considered a citizen but could not vote.

Barriers to Voting

LITERACY TESTS: Some states required people to take literacy tests in order to vote. These tests were difficult for most black men because they did not have a chance to get an education. The tests were also given unfairly so that even educated blacks would fail while whites who could not read would pass.

GRANDFATHER CLAUSES: Some states made laws that allowed people who could not pass a literacy test to vote if their grandfathers had the right to vote. Whites could qualify because their grandfathers had the right to vote. However, no blacks could qualify because none of their grandfathers, who had been slaves, had been allowed to vote.

POLL TAXES: Some states charged a poll tax. Since most former slaves were very poor, they could not pay the tax and therefore could not vote.

Qualification and Requirements for Voting in Texas

Voting is a basic way to participate in a democratic government. However, many people do not vote – sometimes because they don't know the voting process.

To be qualified to vote in Texas, a person must:

1. be 18 years of age or older;
2. be a United States citizen;
3. not have been determined totally mentally incapacitated or partially mentally incapacitated without the right to vote by a final judgment of a court;
4. not have been finally convicted of a felony or, if so convicted, has:
 - a. fully discharged the person's sentence, including any term of incarceration, parole, or supervision, or completed a period of probation ordered by any court (Sec. 11.002 of Texas Election Code); or,
 - b. been pardoned or otherwise released from the resulting disability to vote;
5. be a resident of the county or political subdivision on the day of the election; and,
6. be registered to vote



How to Register to Vote in Texas:

- a. Complete a post card application for voter registration and mail it postage-free, or present it in person, to the voter registrar in your county.
- b. You may register to vote at any time, but your application must be postmarked or received by the voter registrar at least 30 days before an election in order for you to vote in that election.
- c. You may register to vote if you are at least 17 years and 10 months of age on the date the registration application is submitted to the voter registrar, but you may not vote until you are 18 years of age.

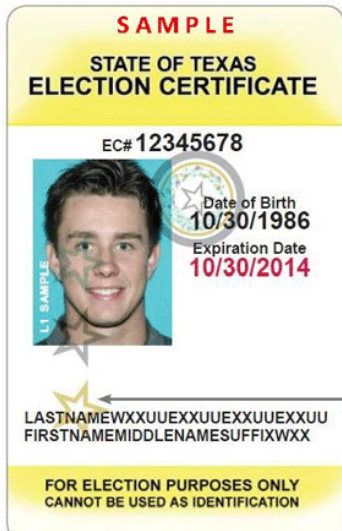
Persons in the armed forces, or those working outside the U.S.; may register by completing a Federal Post Card Application.

As long as you remain at the address on your voter registration card, you continue to be registered.

A voter does not register as a member of a political party or as an Independent, as some other states require.

Photo Identification will now be required when voting in elections in Texas.

Acceptable forms of photo identification (ID) to present when voting include:
(Unexpired or expired less than 60 days)



- Texas Driver License
- Texas Personal Identification Card
- U.S. Passport Book or Card
- Texas Concealed Handgun License
- U.S. Military Identification with Photo
- U.S. Citizenship Certificate or Certificate of Naturalization with Photo

Only individuals who do not already have an acceptable form of photo identification (ID) to present when voting are eligible to receive an Election Identification Certificate (EIC) at their local Department of Public Safety (DPS) Office.

To qualify for an Election Identification Certificate (EIC), applicants must be:

- A U.S. Citizen;
- A Texas Resident;
- Eligible to vote in Texas (show a valid voter registration card or submit a voter registration when applying for the EIC); and
- Be 17 years and 10 months old or older

Residents with a documented disability may apply at their county voter registrar for a permanent exemption from the photo ID requirement. If approved, they will not need a photo ID to vote. Also, if individuals are voting by mail, they do not have to submit a photo ID.



Voter Participation

The power to govern is exercised, either directly or indirectly, through our right to vote. Voting is our way of making decisions, stating our opinion or expressing satisfaction or dissatisfaction with public officials.

Your vote can make a difference. A number of critical elections would have turned out differently if just one more person in each precinct had voted the other way. For example, it is claimed that if only one more vote per precinct had voted for Richard Nixon in 1960, Nixon would have been elected president at that time. In 1982, thirteen congressional elections were decided by fewer than fifteen hundred votes.

How important is a vote?

- In 1800 one vote elected Thomas Jefferson president.
- In 1845 the U.S. Senate passed the convention annexing Texas by two votes (25-27).
- In 1867 one vote ratified the purchase of Alaska.
- In 1868, while President Andrew Johnson was impeached, the Senate was one vote shy of the two-thirds necessary to remove him from office.
- In 1920 one vote in the legislature made Tennessee the 36th state needed to ratify the amendment that gave women the right to vote nationwide.
- In 1920 one vote pressured the selective service (draft) just four months before the attack on Pearl Harbor.

It is important to note that decisions being made in your capital city can and will change your life. It is also important to know that we all play an important role in decisions being made. As citizens of this great state and nation, we have a voice in government through utilization of our right to vote. Let your voice be heard, learn about the candidates and issues. When you become of age, cast your ballot - exercise your voice - **VOTE**.



Vote by Mail

You may vote by mail if you are:

- Going to be away from your county on Election Day and during early voting;
- Sick or disabled;
- 65 years of age or older on Election Day
- Or confined in jail, but eligible to vote

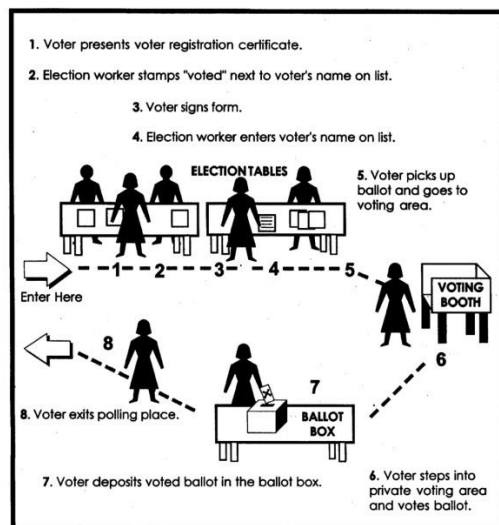
Applications for a ballot by mail must be submitted to the early voting clerk on or after the 60th day before Election Day and before the close of business on the 7th day before Election Day. If the 7th day is a weekend, the last day to submit an application is the preceding Friday.

If you are voting early by mail, you must send your application by:

- Regular mail;
- Common or contract carrier;
- Or FAX (if a FAX machine is available to the early voting clerk and if you are submitting your application from outside the county).

Polling Place

A polling place is a location where a person goes to vote. Many times, the person votes at a school in a classroom like yours. Here is what one looks like and how a person votes.



*Instructors please note that most counties use a direct-recording electronic (DRE) voting system that records votes by means of an electronic display provided with mechanical or electro-optical components that can be activated by the voter; that processes voter selections by means of a computer program; and that records that processed voting data in memory components. The system may further provide a means for transmitting the processed vote data to a central location in individual or accumulated forms for consolidating and reporting results from precincts at a central location.

Elections

Types of elections include: city elections, school district elections, community college elections, water district elections, etc., are held on Uniform Election Dates.

When are Elections?

There are two uniform election dates in Texas for political subdivisions that occur in the months of May and November. Specifically, those election dates are the second Saturday in May, and the first Tuesday after the first Monday in November. Additionally, statewide and federal elections are held in the months of March, April, and November of even-numbered years. There are exceptions to these uniform election dates, and in some cases, the Governor can call a special election. For instance, in the case of a vacancy in the state legislature or Congress, the Governor will call a Special Election. But generally, you can only participate in elections held during these months.

Primary, Runoff, and General Elections (These are the elections at which votes are cast for the offices of President, Governor, federal and statewide officials).

Primary Election: 1st Tuesday in March in even-numbered years. You vote in either the Democratic or Republican Primary and you would vote for federal (U.S. Senate), state (State Senate, State Representative), and county officers (County Judge, County Clerk, etc).

Runoff Elections: 2nd Tuesday in April following the primary election in even numbered years. You can vote in only one primary, and if you vote in that primary, you are entitled to vote in that party's runoff election. If you don't vote in either primary, you can vote in the Primary Runoff election for whichever party you chose.

General Election: 1st Tuesday after the 1st Monday in November in even-numbered years. You would vote on federal, state, and county officers in this type of an election. For example: President, Governor, U.S. Senate, State Senator, etc.

Conduct of Elections:

Elections are held at local precincts across the state from 7 a.m. until 7 p.m. Most Precincts in the state have voting machines which help speed the vote counting.

Federal Post Card Applications are available to those in the armed services and persons working outside the U.S. These applications allow people to register and to cast early voting by mail ballots. Students living away from home, persons who expect to be away from home on

business or vacation on Election Day, and individuals too ill to vote at their precincts, or are 65 years or older may apply for an early voting by mail ballot. If a voter is eligible to vote early by mail, he or she may do so by requesting an application for a ballot by mail from the registrar's office and returning the application in person or by mail.

In addition, all registered voters may vote early by personal appearance up to 17 days before Election Day. To vote early by personal appearance, the voter votes in person at the main early voting polling place or at any duly designated early voting branch location during designated voting hours. Contact your local early voting clerk for a list of the places and hours of operation of early voting polling places.



Facts

All over the world, people do not have the same rights that we enjoy as Americans many people in other countries just recently, as recently as 2005, are gaining the right to vote.

In an effort to increase youth civic education and engagement at the local level AACT, a non-profit, non-partisan organization focuses on electoral participation for high school seniors. In the fall and spring, AACT provides seniors of Rio Grande Valley High Schools the opportunity to learn about the importance of voting and the impact it can have on their future and the future of their communities. Students participating in AACT's Public Education Voter Awareness Program will receive a packet, which includes a personal message from the Advocacy Alliance Center of Texas, along with a voter registration card, a pledge card, a pen, a sticker, and a pen.

It is imperative to get involved in the electoral process if you want to make a difference. But, in order to participate in the democratic process, you must register to vote. If you are 17 years old and 10 months, you are eligible to register to vote. Come on; make a difference, **AACT NOW, REGISTER AND VOTE!**



Vocabulary

Early Voting- the process by which electors can vote on a single or series of days prior to an election. Early voting can take place remotely, such as by mail, or in person, usually in designated early polling stations

Democracy- a form of government in which the supreme power is vested in the people and exercised directly by them or by their elected agents under a free electoral system

General Election- a regularly scheduled local, state, or national election in which voters elect officeholders

Political Party- a political organization that typically seeks to influence government policy, usually by nominating candidates with aligned political views, by trying to seat them in political office.

Incumbent- somebody in office: somebody currently holding an official post, especially in a church or political organization

Registration- to apply for and obtain inclusion of one's name on the list of voters

Republic- a state in which the supreme power rests in the body of citizens entitled to vote and is exercised by representatives chosen directly or indirectly by them.

Vote- a formal expression of opinion or choice on a ballot or ticket, either positive or negative, made by an individual or body of individuals.

Ballot- a slip or sheet of paper, cardboard, voting machine or the like, on which a voter marks his or her vote.

Campaign- the competition by rival political candidates and organizations for public office

Elections- the selection of a person for office by vote

Primary -a preliminary election in which voters of each party nominate candidates for office, party officers, etc.

Eligibility- requirements people must meet before being allowed to vote

Lobbyist -a person who tries to influence legislation on behalf of a special interest

Politics -the practice or study of the art and science of forming, directing, and administering states and other political units

Polling Place -a place at or in which votes in an election are cast

Precinct -a district, as of a city, marked out for governmental or administrative purposes

Voting machine- a mechanical apparatus used in a polling place to register and count the votes

Resources

**Office of the Secretary of State
Executive Division
State Capital
P.O. Box 12697
Austin, Texas 78711-2697
512.463.5701
www.sos.state.tx.us
www.votexas.org**

**Elections Division
P.O. Box 12060
Austin, Texas 78711-2060
1.800.252.8683 (VOTE)
www.sos.state.tx.us
www.votexas.org**

**Provide: The Elections Division
Provides election
Information, sample
ballots, voter registration
applications, educational
brochures, and election
returns.**